

General Regulations

Possession limit means the number of fish that you may possess at any time in any form: fresh, stored in freezers or lockers, salted, smoked, dried, canned or otherwise preserved. It is unlawful to preserve fish (salted, smoked, dried, canned, or otherwise preserved) before taking them to your permanent residence (the physical abode or structure you maintain as your principal, legal residence) unless those fish can be counted. Mobile recreational vehicles, travel trailers, tents or storage/freezer lockers do not qualify as permanent residences. No person may sell or take for the purpose of sale any fish except as authorized in commercial fishing regulations.

Daily limit means the number of fish you may legally take during a calendar day. It is unlawful to exceed the standard daily limit unless the regulations for the water body where you are fishing specify a different limit. "Legally taken" means fish caught and not immediately released alive. Where catch-and-release is allowed, fish immediately released alive are considered not taken. A fish when landed and not immediately released becomes part of the daily limit of the person originally hooking the fish, even if the fish is donated to another person. If you receive fish from another angler, those fish also become part of your daily limit. You may possess the daily limit allowed only for the body of water on which you are fishing.

Handling and Transporting Legally Taken Fish

While a person is fishing, or while on the water or on the ice:

- All fish in possession must be visibly identifiable to species.
- All fish in possession must be whole with head, skin, fins and tail attached. Gills and entrails may be removed (see Disposal of Dead Fish and Fish Entrails on page 10).

Once off the water or ice, fish may be dressed and filleted for transport to your permanent residence, unless size limits apply, under the following conditions:

- All fish can be counted and identified. Two fillets will be counted as one fish. If the catch is frozen prior to transport, each fish or fillet must be packaged so it can be counted.
- Salmonids (Trout, Salmon, Arctic Grayling, Char and Whitefish): the entire skin must be attached to the fillet for identification.

General Fishing Seasons and Hours

Fishing Hours

- Fishing is allowed at all hours during open fishing seasons unless otherwise specified in District Exceptions to Standard Regulations.

Fishing Season: Lakes/Reservoirs and Rivers/Streams

- All waters open entire year unless otherwise specified in District Exceptions to Standard Regulations.

Special Paddlefish Regulations

All Paddlefish anglers must purchase a paddlefish tag, a conservation license, and the required fishing license (see License Requirements pages 4-5). All licenses must be in the angler's immediate possession while fishing.

Daily and Possession Limits and Tags: one Paddlefish per season per angler. Anglers may select only one of the following areas, and may only fish in the area selected:

- Upper Missouri River, upstream from Fort Peck Dam to Fort Benton - **White Tag**
- Fort Peck Dredge Cuts (west of Park Grove Bridge and Nelson Dredge) on the Missouri River - **Blue Tag**
- Yellowstone River and Missouri River downstream from Fort Peck Dam - **Yellow Tag**

General Paddlefish Regulations for ALL Areas

- It is unlawful for an individual to sell any portion of a paddlefish including eggs (processed or unprocessed) as prescribed by the F&W Commission.
- Anglers harvesting a paddlefish anywhere in Montana (Yellowstone River, Missouri River or Ft Peck Dredge Cuts) are required to report harvested paddlefish within 48 hours of harvest.
- Reporting options include: on-site where fish was harvested (in some instances fisheries staff will be available to assist with reporting), phone hotline (1-877-FWP-WILD or 406-444-0356, or MyFWP.)
- Anglers reporting a harvested paddlefish will be required to provide the following information: Angler tag number, jaw tag number (if present), length (eye-tail fork), sex, date of harvest and harvest location. Additional information that may be collected on-site includes: weight and age structure (jaw section).
- Instructions for reporting will be included when the paddlefish tag is sold.
- Anglers not reporting a harvested paddlefish will not be eligible to purchase a paddlefish tag the following year.
- All waters open to angling are open to snagging paddlefish during the open paddlefish season by anglers with a valid tag, except the Ft Peck Dredge Cuts Archery section.
- Snagging non-game fish is allowed on all open waters in the Eastern District except on the Missouri River downstream from Fort Benton to the North Dakota border and on the Yellowstone River downstream from the mouth of the Bighorn River.
- Each angler must cast for, hook and reel in his or her own paddlefish. It is unlawful for another person to do so. It is unlawful to loan tags or use another angler's tag.
- Hook size is limited to 8/0 and smaller for all paddlefish snagging.
- Gaffs, no longer than 4.5 feet in length, may be used to land a paddlefish that will be tagged. Gaffs may not be used to land a paddlefish that will be released.
- Any tag locked shut prior to attachment to a paddlefish shall be void and is not replaceable. Any altered or modified tag shall be void. **Voided or lost tags are not replaceable.**
- Paddlefish must be tagged immediately upon harvest.
- It is unlawful to possess an untagged paddlefish or part of one. If anglers cut up a paddlefish, they must keep the part of the fish back and dorsal fin (back fin) where the tag is attached and sealed to the fish.
- Tags must remain with processed fish until consumption.
- When a paddlefish is captured and tagged, the fish must be removed from the river by the end of the day (9:00 PM MST).

Tagging a Paddlefish

- Cut a small hole in the base of the dorsal fin.
- Insert the metal loop portion of the plastic self-locking tag through this hole and seal tag.
- The metal loop must penetrate the fish so as to make the plastic self-locking tag non-removable when tag is sealed.
- The plastic self-locking tag must be completely sealed so it cannot be reopened. Any fish not tagged in accordance with these instructions shall be considered to be untagged. You must have your conservation and Paddlefish license in your possession to fish for or/and take Paddlefish.

